

Senate Bill 286
February 15, 2013
Presented by Ron Aasheim
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ron Aasheim, Administrator of the Communication and Education Division for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) here on behalf of Director Hagener. I am here in opposition to Senate Bill 286.

In the interest of time I would refer the committee to my previous testimony specific to Senate Bill 285.

In addition to those comments we have concerns relative to enforcement with the change in hunter orange requirements suggested in SB 285. Our concerns have to do with individuals moving from private property to public lands. In Montana private property commonly borders public land, and often those boundaries are not marked. Inadvertent violations should be expected when hunters move from private to public land. Those hunters would suddenly be required to wear hunter orange on public land and would be in violation of the law if they did not comply.

With that we would recommend a Do Not Pass for Senate Bill 286.

Senate Bill 285
February 14, 2013
Presented by Ron Aasheim
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ron Aasheim, Administrator of the Communication and Education Division for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) here on behalf of FWP Director Hagener. I am here as an opponent to SB 285.

Our concerns have to do with safety.

Requiring individuals to wear a distinguishing article of apparel has been on the books in Montana since 1937 when individuals were required to wear an outer garment of a bright red color.

In 1961, the allowable colors were expanded to red, orange or yellow and in 1971 the statute was changed to require any person hunting or accompanying a hunter as an outfitter or guide to wear a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange above the waist visible at all times

Some 40 states in the United States and 5 provinces in Canada currently require hunters to wear hunter orange. The best information we have suggests that states with a hunter orange requirement have documented a steady decline in hunting related firearm injuries since the requirement was instituted.

Our interest in retaining the hunter orange requirement is not only for the safety of an individual who might be mistakenly shot by a hunter but also for the protection of a hunter who might accidentally shoot a hunter that he mistakenly thought was a game animal.

Hunter orange has been a cornerstone of our hunter education program. Exempting adults seems to send a mixed message. We are not sure what rationale our hunter education instructors would use in explaining the difference in requirements to their students.

We rarely receive complaints from hunters regarding the hunter orange requirement, it is well accepted. We believe the existing law has helped keep hunters safe and helped reduce hunting related injuries and fatalities.

We recommend a Do Not Pass.